

Commonly Asked Questions from Small and Very Small Plants on Sanitation Performance Standards

Question 1: Do chemical sanitizers used on surfaces in direct contact with food (food contact surface) have to be approved for use in the plant?

Answer 1:

FSIS does not approve chemical sanitizers. Sanitizers used on food contact surfaces must meet FDA requirements with the establishment having documentation that the sanitizer is safe for use in a food-processing environment. This documentation must be available to FSIS upon request.

Chemical sanitizers must be used according to the manufacturer's directions. The label on the sanitizer should state that the sanitizer is safe for use on food contact surfaces.

Question 2: What types of materials are required to be used to construct walls in an inspected establishment?

Answer 2:

The regulations do not specify the types of materials that must be used for wall construction in an inspected facility but do require the materials to be:

- Durable and kept in good repair, and
- Impervious to (not capable of being damaged by) moisture

When using these materials, the establishment should comply with the local municipal building codes.

In an effort to assist establishments, FSIS has prepared a document titled USDA/NCDA & Consumer Services Facility Guidelines for Meat and Poultry Plants. The Agency published this document in the Federal Register Volume 62, dated August 25, 1997, and you can access it on-line at http://www.ncagr.com/vet/meat_poultry/pdf/Facility%20Guidelines.pdf

Question 3: What documents can be used to demonstrate that the water used in the establishment is potable (i.e., fit for human consumption)?

Answer 3: A potability certificate or report from a State or local health agency or other responsible organization is acceptable. The potability certificate for water from a municipal source must be available to FSIS upon request. It does not have to be renewed annually.

When the water supply comes from a private well, the establishment must have a water potability certificate or report from a State or local health agency or other

responsible entity certifying potability. The potability certificate or report must be renewed at least every six months and available to FSIS upon request.

When ice is being supplied to the establishment from an outside source, the establishment must have records showing that the water used to make the ice is potable. The documentation must be available to FSIS upon request.

Question 4a: Can containers used to store or handle inedible product be used for edible product if they are first cleaned?

Answer 4a: No, “inedible” is defined by regulation as adulterated, uninspected, or not intended for use as human food. When an establishment designates a container for storing or handling of “inedible” product, that container cannot be used to store edible product even if it is cleaned and sanitized. Those containers are to be identified by label, color, or other means as “inedible”.

Question 4b: If product goes off condition in an edible container, does that container holding this product then need to be designated as inedible?

Answer 4b: No, the container does not have to be designated as an inedible container.

Question 4c: If an edible product is destined for inedible purposes, e.g., bones; fat, does the container holding this product then need to be designated as inedible?

Answer 4c: No. Establishments may store bones or fat in edible containers even though the bones or fat are destined for inedible use.

Question 5: Am I required to provide a letter of guarantee for the ingredients used to manufacture meat, poultry, or egg products?

Answer 5: The regulations do not require establishments to provide letters of guarantee for ingredients used to manufacture meat, poultry or egg products. However, ingredients used in the production of meat, poultry, and egg products are required to be clean, sound, healthful, and wholesome. The use of ingredients must not adulterate the products that are being produced.